DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 429 780 RC 021 930

AUTHOR Mayhew, Jack; Herbert, Michael; Peregoy, John J.; Sebastian, Joan P.

TITLE Culture and School Success: Development of a Documentary-Style Distance Education Course.

PUB DATE 1999-03-00

NOTE 9p.; In: Rural Special Education for the New Millennium. Conference Proceedings of the American Council on Rural Special Education (ACRES) (19th, Albuquerque, New Mexico, March 25-27, 1999); see RC 021 888.

PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS *American Indians; *Cultural Awareness; Curriculum Development; Distance Education; *Education Courses; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; Interviews; *Material Development; Multicultural Education; *Multimedia Materials; Teacher Education

IDENTIFIERS University of Utah; *Video Production

ABSTRACT

The University of Utah offers four graduate courses to prepare teachers to work more effectively with American Indian students. This paper describes the development of a documentary-style, video-mediated distance learning course that, with solicited input from American Indian advisors, synthesized content from the four on-campus courses. The course was conceptualized as a graduate level course to be offered in both preservice and inservice contexts. The "professor plus" model was selected, utilizing stand-alone video modules with printed support materials and an on-site facilitator. Project developers were adamant that the course use a documentary format in which American Indians and other professionals would share their experiences in their own words. Steps in course design included: (1) outlining overall goals, factors influencing course development, and potential problems to provide a common understanding for the project team; (2) identifying knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed by learners to fulfill course goals; (3) arranging course content to meet the scaffolding needs of instruction; and (4) setting realistic expectations about media production costs and time. Elements in video production included the shooting schedule and related problems, conducting interviews in a respectful and culturally appropriate manner, and selecting background footage to support interview content. Postproduction elements included editing and final "finishing" to produce 15 one-hour video modules and development of facilitator and student guides. Contains 18 references. (SV)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Diane Montgomery

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Jack Mayhew
Michael Herbert
John J. Peregoy
Joan P. Sebastian
University of Utah
1705 E. Campus Center Dr. Rm. 221
Salt Lake City, UT 84112

CULTURE AND SCHOOL SUCCESS: DEVELOPMENT OF A DOCUMENTARY-STYLE DISTANCE EDUCATION COURSE

ED 429 780

When there are walls of ignorance between people, when we don't know each other's stories, we substitute our own myth about who that person is. When we are operating with only a myth, none of that person's truth will ever be known to us and we will injure them – mostly without ever meaning to. What assumption did you make because she is a woman? What assumption did you make because he is Black? What myths were built around the neighborhood listed on the application? What myths were built around the employment of the father or absence of the mother? What story did we tell ourselves in the absence of knowing this person's real story?

Paula Lawrence Wehmiller
(Harvard Educational Review, Fall 1992)

American society is becoming increasingly multicultural. U. S. Department of Education (1998) statistics indicate that the percentage of White, non-Hispanic students decreased by 11.2% from 1976 to 1995. Conversely, the total minority student population increased by 11.1% over the same time period. The teaching force in the United States, however, does not reflect these demographic changes. Williams (1990) found that 90% of public school teachers are Caucasian, and that only 7% are African-American and 3% are from other minority groups. U. S. Department of Education (1994) projections indicate that by the year 2000 the percentage of minority educators will drop to 6%, although minority student populations are predicted to continue growing. What are the implications of these contrasting demographics?

For many minority students, particularly those characterized by sociologist John Ogbu (1992) as involuntary or caste-like minorities, the implications include alienation, disproportionately high dropout rates, over-representation in special education, and generally higher instances of life problems and lower instances of life successes. American Indian students, in general, fit this description. The Final Report of the Indian Nations At Risk Task Force states that, "Our schools have failed to nurture the intellectual development and academic performance of many Native children, as is evident from their high dropout rates and negative attitudes towards school" (U.S. Department of Education 1991, p. 1). Data gathered as a result of this report identified multiple issues regarding the training of teachers, cultural differences in the non-verbal regulation of classroom interaction, culturally appropriate curriculum, and psychoeducational assessment measures and practices. In response to this report and the growing concern in Utah for the educational needs of American Indian students, the Department of Special Education at the University of Utah developed, with the assistance of federal grants, a graduate program designed to prepare teachers to work more effectively with these students. The program included four courses offered during summer quarter sessions. Faculty from Special Education, Educational Studies, Educational Psychology, and Ethnic Studies collaborated in the development and implementation of this

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

RC 021930

program of study. The purpose of this paper is to describe the creation of a documentary-style, video-mediated distance learning course called "Culture and School Success" that, with solicited input from an American Indian advisory board, synthesized content from the four on-campus courses.

Course Development

In 1997, the project developers applied for and received funding for a curriculum development effort sponsored by the Utah System of Higher Education under a Technology and Distance Education Initiative. The course to be developed was conceptualized as a graduate level course that would be available in both pre-service and in-service contexts to educators in both urban and rural/remote parts of Utah. A model utilizing stand alone video modules with printed support materials and an on-site facilitator was selected. This "Professor Plus" model (Sebastian, Egan, Welch, & Page, 1996) has been used extensively in the rural, distance education program of the Department of Special Education at the University of Utah. The modular format is cost effective and flexible because it allows for periodic updating and refinement.

In conceptualizing the course, the project developers were adamant that a documentary format be utilized in which American Indians and other professionals would be provided the opportunity to share their experiences in their own words. Far too often, the lived experiences of individuals from marginalized groups have been filtered through the cultural lenses of members of the dominant culture. A general misperception of American Indians persists that is rooted in images from the 19th century which has perpetuated many false stereotypes. In fact, there are currently over 2.3 million American Indians affiliated with 557 tribes (Peregoy, 1999; Russell, 1997). Each tribe has its own distinct culture and traditions. Individuals may fall anywhere on a continuum from traditional to mainstream. The purpose of selecting a documentary format for this course was to allow people to tell their own stories in their own words. The circle was chosen as the culturally relevant metaphor for the course. In many American Indian cultures the circle represents the balance of life, as all things important to maintaining life fit somewhere on the circle. By touching one part of the circle, all parts are included. It was found that the metaphor used to address the issues of the course also applied to the development process in creating the distance education course (Herbert, Mayhew, Sebastian, 1997).

Design Process

It was clear from the initial proposal that the project would need extensive technical assistance. Therefore, support from an instructional design team and resources for multimedia development were built into the proposal. The four faculty members who served as content specialists were provided with either released time from other course assignments or stipend support. An American Indian graduate assistant was selected to help obtain and organize course support materials. Two additional faculty members, involved in the distance teacher education program in the department, completed the project development team. A total of ten individuals with divergent backgrounds and experiences were directly involved in the development and production of the course. Each person had a different role, responsibility and expertise to contribute to the process, including: distance education specialist, syllabus designer, video producer, world wide web consultant, copyright research specialist and content specialists in the fields of Indian education, special education, educational psychology, and ethnic studies. Coordinating the activities of the design team, particularly at the beginning of the project, became one of the greatest challenges of this project (Gibson, Sebastian, Herbert, & Mayhew, 1998).

In order to successfully communicate and produce what you set out to produce, it is essential that the development team have a shared vision of the finished product. The team needs to come together to

develop a shared language to be able to communicate with one another about all aspects of the project. Individuals involved in the process often have different world-views and perspectives in terms of the design, development, production and implementation process. By involving development stakeholders in the design process, needs, frustrations and alternative solutions can be addressed (Carr, 1997). It is essential that the design effort be interdisciplinary in nature. It is unlikely that any one person will be a specialist in all media and content areas to be covered in the process of developing a successful course (DeBloois 1983, cited in Romiszowski, 1986).

Some faculty members may be resistant to this collaborative model, however. The higher education culture places great emphasis on ownership of intellectual property, student credit hours and revenues from the completed course. These issues must be addressed prior to starting the project. The most important pre-requisite for faculty involvement, regardless of the political landscape, must be the motivation to create an effective instructional environment for the learner. With this as a common denominator among all team members, all other logistical problems are more likely to be solved through effective communication.

The tool for communication in this production process is the instructional design, which should be developed collaboratively. Team members' experiences, revelations, and enthusiasm for the project need to mix together through time in order to find solutions to instructional challenges. Therefore, time must be allowed in the design process for breathing moments, reflection, and review. The process should be flexible, keeping the learner as its focus and ultimate beneficiary. Instruction can only benefit the learner, however, if it is implemented. Therefore, the team must accomplish stages of design, development, and production within the context of production timelines, grant funding periods, and academic calendars. To insure that no step is left undone, instructional design systematizes the process, but it should not take the creativity and flexibility away from the design team. The process should give the team freedom for creativity by taking away the stresses that come from last minute production issues.

To assist the design process an instructional designer facilitated a series of large group brainstorming sessions. This person utilized a systematic approach to the design process (Gustafson & Branch, 1997; Romiszowski, 1986) to insure that all aspects of the project were thoroughly thought out before the production process began. The following four stages of design were addressed in developing the course.

Stage 1 - Course Parameters

In the first stage of development the team outlined all of the influencing factors in the course as well as the overall goal of the course. This provided a common vocabulary to describe the problems and the solutions:

- Who will be taking this course?
- Where will it be taught?
- What technical limitations will the students have?
- Can the material developed for this course be used in any other ways?
- Why are we offering this course?
- In what specific way will this course meet the challenge?
- How much money do we have to work with?
- When will the course be implemented?

This type of analysis is helpful in making the tough decisions of what to include and what to

leave out. Many of the issues discussed at this stage are often overlooked because team members may assume that everyone is starting from the same understanding of the project. However, with a diverse group of people it is risky to make such assumptions. What may seem trivial in the beginning could become a major production problem later in the process.

Stage 2 -Content

During this stage the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed by the learners in order to achieve the overall goal of the course were identified. The ultimate objective was to define the knowledge gaps between where the students start the course and where they need to be after instruction. From this information a set of learner outcomes were developed.

Stage 3- Scaffolding

In this stage, the team identified the best way to meet the learner outcomes defined in stage 2. The goal was to chunk the concepts in a way that built a scaffold of superordinate and subordinate concepts linking prior knowledge to new knowledge (Pressley & McCormick, 1995). The course content chunks were pulled into a sequence by the team. In order to illustrate these sequences, lists were put up on walls to help the group visualize the structure of the course. As outcomes were developed, the sequence was reorganized in a manner that best met the scaffolding needs of the instruction. This scaffolding had to fit within the confines of the University imposed semester system, 15 two-hour sessions. The team then identified the most effective way to achieve these outcomes by deciding which medium would best address each concept while keeping the learner engaged and motivated in the process.

Stage 4 - Media Element Design

At this stage the team set realistic expectations about the production timeline and costs. Once a specific list of media production needs was identified, it became easier to determine what already existed and what needed to be produced. Valuable production time and money could be saved by using segments already available. The production outline also facilitated more involvement from the community in finding resources for the production. During this stage, the team identified subject matter experts for each produced element and assigned those elements to a faculty member who served as the production team's contact point.

Although the process has been described in stages it is by no means linear. With a diverse team it is important to take a more iterative approach to the process, allowing the team to construct and deconstruct the design. A total of eight all-day meetings over a period of two months were needed to develop the course. Due to outside commitments, not all of the design team participated in each meeting. Therefore, throughout the process the team would need to go back and evaluate what happened during the previous session, deconstructing and reconstructing the work. By keeping the work done to date visible to the team via white boards and paper post-ups, the faculty was reminded of content already covered which helped to keep the team on track. However, it was sometimes difficult for a faculty member to let go of a specific content area and to move on in the course.

Since the course addresses the concerns of an under-represented segment of the community, it was seen as particularly important to solicit community involvement. An advisory board comprised of leaders in the field of American Indian education, school district personnel, families, and tribal representatives was formed to provide additional oversight of the course content and to help with the identification of resources. The design team felt very strongly that regular interaction with the advisory board would be important for the quality and integrity of the course.

Course Production

Once the content of all sessions was determined, it was time to plan for the actual production of the course. With great assistance from the advisory board and content specialists, the specific sites for video acquisition and individuals to be interviewed were identified. Overall, a total of 163 individuals were interviewed, including 115 American Indians representing 22 tribal affiliations. Location shooting was conducted in Montana on the Flathead Reservation, in Idaho on the Shoshone and Bannock Reservations, and in Utah on the Uintah-Ouray Ute Reservation, the Navajo Nation, and in Salt Lake City and San Juan school districts. In addition, several interviews were videotaped at the American Indian Resource Center on the University of Utah campus.

Before any videotaping was conducted, however, cultural awareness training for the production crew was provided by one of the content specialists and two members of the advisory board. This training included information concerning communication styles and issues related to American Indian education. This training proved to be very valuable. The video crew worked with respect, dignity and pride. Kristy, our producer, was awarded a prized necklace by a Native elder for her work as a young female warrior. Gary, our video cameraman, was invited into a Navajo medicine man's hogan to film. Much of the credit for our success on this project is due to the competent and caring video production crew that worked with us.

Shooting Schedule and Other Considerations

Videotaping started in December 1997 and was completed in early April 1998. Before any shooting could be conducted, however, much preparation work needed to be done. Once the locations and individuals had been identified, it was necessary to develop a shooting schedule. Shooting dates were limited due to budget constraints and prior commitments of the video production crew. Travel arrangements were made and interview schedules were developed. It was helpful to identify a primary contact person at each site. Each person interviewed was required to sign a release form giving permission to use that person's image and voice for the purposes of the course. For children under the age of 18, parental permission was required prior to shooting.

Even the best plans, however, sometimes do not work out. Problems encountered during the acquisition phase included interview no-shows, inclement weather, vehicle breakdowns, and a malfunctioning video camera. A complete day's footage and a planned three-day shoot had to be scrapped when a computer chip in the video camera went bad. A re-shoot was scheduled, but some individuals were unable to participate due to prior commitments.

The Interviews

Documentary is a form of story-telling; due to time constraints it can be nothing else (Kriwaczek, 1997). Because of time limitations, it is important to determine which people are the most knowledgeable and open (Rosenthal, 1990). They may be technical experts and authorities, or ordinary people who have undergone the experience that is being documented. According to Rosenthal, when you conduct interviews you are not aiming for balance, you are aiming for the truth. You are not just collecting facts about a subject, but trying to gain a perspective that goes beyond the facts. Therefore, it is essential to begin with a set of purposeful questions, but to also be open to the stories that emerge. These stories may be more powerful than any of the facts that you uncover.

Of major importance to our model was that story telling is implicitly culturally appropriate and

consistent with our expressed goals of not only telling their story in their own words, but also in their own way. It was risky in time and money, since we could not predict or script our time as we might like. However, this was essential in order to gain trust with a population that has not fared well, historically, with the media. We relied on early informants to tell others that we were honest and that their voice would be heard without cutting them off. This approach enabled us to interview many Native individuals, including several non-English speaking Navajo elders and a Navajo medicine man, who otherwise may have been reluctant.

When conducting the interview, it is important to put the subject at ease. The goal is for the subject to provide open and articulate responses to your questions. The interview set, with bright lights, camera, camera operator, sound person, grip, director, and interviewer can be very intimidating. It is helpful to establish a rapport with the subject by making sure that she or he is comfortable and by starting out with fairly general questions. It also helps when the interviewer is calm and relaxed. The interview, itself, is unrehearsed and unscripted. As noted above, the interviewer is prepared with a list of purposeful questions, but the interviewer does not know exactly how the subject will respond to those questions. An alert interviewer will improvise appropriate follow-up questions to prompt the subject to respond with clarity and thoroughness.

Background Footage

The old saying goes "a picture is worth a thousand words." For that reason, documentaries rely on carefully selected background footage (aka "B-roll"). B-roll is used to add emphasis to the words that are spoken by the subjects, and to create an image in the minds of the viewers. For example, when a subject is discussing the importance of technology in education today, the producer would overlay footage of students working on computers. This not only serves to reinforce the points the subject is making, but also creates a more visually pleasing experience for the viewer. Overall, the interview content drives the B-roll. After the interview has been videotaped, the producer and the project directors would identify B-roll shots that would support the content of the interview.

Post Production

Video Module Production

Approximately 70 hours of video footage were acquired. The next challenge was to condense this into 15 one-hour sessions. In order to create a consistent "footprint" for the video sessions, one project co-director was designated to work with the producer to develop the finished videos. The session scripts that were developed the previous summer by the course development team served as blueprints for each video session. On a few occasions, some of the scripts needed to be modified due to the footage that had been acquired, and two sessions ended up being condensed into one. Due to availability of the editing equipment, the producer and project co-director often put in long hours late into the evening and on weekends. Editing began in late spring 1998 and was completed in December.

In addition to the actual video interviews and B-roll footage, other elements were included in the finished product. Original Native flute music was created for this project through a trade arrangement with a local American Indian flutist. Additional music was identified by a member of the advisory board who hosts a weekly Native music program on the local community radio station. Original artwork was commissioned in order to present a consistent visual theme throughout the video sessions and the printed support materials. Much research was conducted to locate archival photographs, and existing video footage. Of course, copyright clearance was needed before any preexisting media could be included in

the finished product.

Support Materials

An important component of effective distance education courses is well-developed support materials. The second project co-director was designated to take the lead on this task. As video sessions were completed in the editing process, the support materials would be developed. These consisted of a facilitator guide and a student guide. The purpose of these guides is to serve as an advance organizer to assist the on-site facilitator and to prompt the students to look for important points made in each video segment. The team wanted to develop an interactive structure that presented a concept or event via video and then utilize breakout activities to engage the learner. The purpose of breakout activities is to allow the learner to create meaningful concrete experiences for him or herself about the abstract concept covered in the video module.

Conclusion

Production of the video sessions and support materials was completed in time to offer the course to two distance sites during the Spring 1999 semester; approximately two years following the original RFP. In hindsight, the project required much more effort than was originally anticipated. However, the end product demonstrates that collaborative, multimedia curriculum development can be accomplished. A course such as "Culture and School Success" requires the combined talents of many individuals: From the original idea seed of the grant developers, to the content specialists, course design specialists, advisory board, producer and crew, artists, musicians, and of course all of the individuals who agreed to be interviewed and who opened up their schools and communities in support of this project. During the initial course offering, evaluation data for each session will be collected and used to make refinements in the course. A web site to support the course will be developed. The developers will also investigate possibilities for additional re-purposing of the course materials, including national distribution since the course is neither Utah nor tribal specific.

References

Carr, A., (1997). User-Design in the Creation of Human Learning Systems Educational Technology Research and Development 41(3), 6.

DeBloois, ML, (1982) Videodisc/Microcomputer Courseware Design. Educational Technology Publications, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.

Final report of the Indian Nations at Risk task force. (1991) (Publication No. 328-409). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Gibson, G. M., Sebastian, J. P., Herbert, M. A., & Mayhew, J. C. (1998). Designing a collaborative multimedia course: Culture and School Success. Technology and Teacher Education Annual, 1998. Charlottesville, VA: Association for the Advancement of Computing Education (AACE).

Gustafson, K. L, & Branch, R. M., (1997). Revisioning Models of Instructional Development. Educational Technology Research and Development, 41 (3), 73-89.

Herbert, M. A., Mayhew, J. C., & Sebastian, J. P. (1997). The circle of life: Preparing teachers

to work with American Indian students with disabilities. Rural Special Education Quarterly 16, (4) 3-9.

Kriwaczek, P. (1997). Documentary for the small screen. Oxford, UK: Focal Press.

Ogbu, J. U. (1992). Understanding cultural diversity and learning. Educational Researcher, 21 (8), 5-14.

Peregoy, J. P. (1999). Personal communication.

]Pressley, M., & McCormick, C. (1995). Cognition, teaching, and assessment. New York: Harper Collins.

Romiszowski, AJ (1986), Developing auto-instructional materials: From programmed text to CAL and interactive video. London: Kogan Page.

Rosenthall, A. (1990). Writing, directing, and producing documentary films. Carbondale and Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Russell, G. (1997). American Indian facts of life: A profile of today's tribes and reservations. Phoenix: Russell Publications.

Sebastian, J.P., Egan, M.W., Welch, M., &Page, B. (1996). Preparing special educators at a distance: Effective televised instruction. Journal of Technology and Teacher Education, 4 145-60.

U. S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics. (1994). The condition of education, 1994. Washington, DC: Author.

U. S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics. (1998). The condition of education, 1998. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from the World Wide Web, Sept. 28, 1998: http://nces.ed.gov/pubs98/conditions.

Wehmiller, P. L. (1992). When the walls come tumbling down. Harvard Educational Review, 62, 373-83.

Williams, B. F. (1990). The challenge of education to social work: The case for minority children. Social Work, 35, 236-242.